



Prosser Library, 1 Tunxis Avenue, Bloomfield, CT 06002 | 860-243-9721

McMahon Wintonbury Library, 1015 Blue Hills Avenue, Bloomfield, CT 06002 | 860-242-0041

BPL Online at bplct.org

Written Testimony of Elizabeth Lane Library Director

Concerning HB 6800: [AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTRONIC BOOK AND DIGITAL AUDIOBOOK LICENSING](#)

March 10, 2023

Senator Rahman, Representative Kavros DeGraw, and distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee,

I am thankful for your time and attention to these important matters that impact access to information of all kinds to every resident in our state, both young and old.

My name is Elizabeth Lane and I live in Bloomfield, Connecticut. I have the privilege of serving the wonderful community of Bloomfield as the Director of Bloomfield Public Library. I am also a mom of young readers. I am writing today in support of HB 6800: AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTRONIC BOOK AND DIGITAL AUDIOBOOK LICENSING, commonly referred to as Connecticut's Ebook Bill.

I am in the very important business of connecting people to information. It may sound easy, but I can assure you that it is not. Accessing information in an equitable way is a social justice issue. Libraries are struggling to break down the many barriers to access, but we do not have the staffing or monetary resources to battle the power of corporate entities who keep rewriting the rules, and more problematically, libraries pay a lot more for digital materials than the general consumer. Last month alone, we paid \$1,000 for 18 ebooks that WE WILL NEVER OWN. Rather, they disappear from our online library after two years, as most titles are licensed for 24 months or 26 loans, whichever comes first. This is a burden to our budgets and by extension, our taxpayers. As is the trend across CT, use of our online collections surged during COVID-19 and those numbers remain high. We cannot maintain these collections in the current unregulated environment.

We need your help to help us use tax dollars in the same way the average person uses their own money to buy an ebook. We need the government to step in. When ebook legislation went through this process in Maryland two years ago, I excitedly wrote Senator Slap and Representative Gibson asking them to follow suit in Connecticut. In truth, we should have asked for this more than a decade ago.

We are asking you to help level the playing field for libraries of all kinds, public, school and academic, by creating a bill that allows us to better connect people to information without all of the added barriers and increased cost the publishing industry is putting up.



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I want to share five key points that the American Library Association wants addressed about ebooks. Further reading is available here: <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/e-books>

1. All published works must be available for libraries to purchase and lend to library users.
2. Access to and use of eBooks must equitably balance the rights and privileges of readers, authors, and publishers.
3. Digital content must be accessible to all people, regardless of physical or reading disabilities.
4. Library patrons must be able to access digital content on the device of their choosing.
5. Reading records must remain private in the digital age.

You may also find this [April 26, 2022 Letter to RI Legislature from ALA](#) urging the passage of eBooks legislation of interest. As that letter states, we need your help to enable public libraries to continue in the digital age to fulfill our mission of providing the public with access to information.

Stick up for school libraries. Stick up for public libraries.

Thank you and please remember that just like you, libraries work to serve all. We must have #eBooksForAll!